



# Physical Violence within the home in the Amazon

In April 2021, the End Violence Lab at the University of Edinburgh, launched the **Colombia INSPIRE Coordination Course**, a 15-module online course co-delivered with transnational stakeholders: the **National Alliance to End Violence Against Children and Adolescents of Colombia**, the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF), **USAID HEARD**, the **CDC**, and **Together for Girls**. The course content was **co-designed with national partners** for practitioners and decision-makers engaged with the **implementation, monitoring, and scale-up of INSPIRE interventions** in the departments in Colombia.

As part of the End Violence Lab's commitment to global learning, this real-time piece addresses issues around the cultural and social normalization of physical punishment within the home.

On 23 March this year, Colombia achieved a breakthrough with the passage of a new legal framework relating to preventing violence within the home: the **Colombian Senate of Law 320**. This framework prohibits physical punishment and any form of violence as a disciplinary method against children and adolescents." It was sanctioned thanks to a three-year advocacy campaign by a coalition of senators, together with the Colombian Child Welfare Institute (ICBF), UNICEF, national and international child protection civil society actors, universities, and independent experts.

The aim of this Law is not to punish parents or other caregivers, rather, **its goal** is to raise awareness of the impact of physical punishment within the home on children's social and psychological wellbeing. It also promotes national prevention and pedagogical public policies that teach caregivers methods to educate, guide, and discipline their children without violence. Colombian policymakers expect this law to generate a cultural shift in social norms by promoting alternative disciplinary methods that respect and protect children and adolescents.

## Addressing Physical Violence in Vaupés

The Department of Vaupés is a 54,000 km<sup>2</sup> territory located in the Colombian Amazon. Eighty-seven per cent (87%) of the population live in **indigenous communities**. The majority of these communities are dispersed in difficult-to-access areas of the jungle. Vaupés has the **highest suicide rate** in Colombia, with 22.8 suicides per 100,000 population. **Poverty** and, in many cases, extreme poverty, affect 66.5 per cent (66.5%) of the population. This, coupled with cultural assimilation, has a lasting impact on indigenous peoples' mental health. **Over 2,500 cases of physical and sexual violence** were reported within Vaupés' homes in 2020, and it is likely that at least that many cases go unreported.

Child protection practitioners from the capital city, Mitú, work closely with the ancestral chiefs and community leaders. Using **context-relevant and locally adapted guides** produced by the communities in a participatory process, a variety of awareness-raising campaigns are implemented to promote alternative, non-violent approaches to settle family and community disputes. In addition, when severe cases of violence within the home are reported, the practitioners activate the Government's official **inter-sectoral "roadmap" (ruta de atención)**, a system to ensure the restitution of rights for children who have suffered from violence.





## Applying the Inspire Coordination Course to the local context in Vaupés

Collaboration and coordination is crucial in the Vaupés, given the shortage of human and financial resources. An INSPIRE course participant from Vaupés shared a successful case of coordination and collaboration — using the roadmap — where the health authorities, the ICBF, and the Mayor’s Office prevented an adolescent victim of violence within the family from committing suicide.

The INSPIRE Course focuses several modules on how to coordinate between and within sectors for a good public health response to violence prevention. According to the participants, these modules, as well as those addressing monitoring & evaluation systems, have helped consolidate the work at the Departmental level, noting:

*The Colombia INSPIRE Coordination Course will contribute to creating a critical mass of decision-makers committed to improving the monitoring and evaluation processes already in place and making this system more robust.*

## Using legal frameworks to enhance child protection practice

In addition to the new Law 320, which prohibits physical punishment and other humiliating treatment against children, another law, [Law 2081](#), was also passed addressing sexual crimes against minors. This landmark law establishes that sexual crimes against minors are crimes that can be persecuted without a time limit. Our next realtime piece will address this through a powerful case study.

While participants from Colombia know they still need to achieve full and effective implementation of their legal framework the skills acquired during the Colombia INSPIRE Coordination Course are giving departmental workers the skills they need to make a change.

